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Reaction Paper to Virtual Schools

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Virtual Schools Reaction Paper

Today’s society is changing every second of the day, and we have to keep up with these advances especially in the realm of education. In our classrooms, we have the future. My students can work a tablet better than a pencil sharpener. Technology standards have been implemented in several curriculums and state standards across the nation. This brings forth a lot of buzz around the idea behind “Virtual Schooling”—offering an alternative way to learn to students. There are clear arguments on both sides of the aisle for this issue. There are very successful programs around the country; for example, the Florida Virtual School—that offers online classes everywhere, including West Virginia.

After viewing the websites of the FLVS and West Virginia Virtual Education Policy—I see many positives of programs like the above being implemented. The one that caught my attention the most was on the WVDE website that stated that the offering of virtual learning in a public school setting must have an instructor or mentor teacher to help facilitate the learning and monitoring the progress (WVDE). Students, though may be self-motivated, still need scaffolded support in their learning environments. Also mentioned on the WVDE site, the classes can be offered during the school day; therefore, the students do not need access at home. Most students in my area come from low-income families and cannot afford access to the web in their homes. Looking at the FLVS site, a pro of their school is that they offer a wide-variety of courses for their students and parents to be involved in. They can take classes not offered at their local school all over the country. Here in Wyoming County, due to lack of certified teachers, offer Spanish language courses online in the school streaming from the FLVS site.

Specifically a positive in a high or middle school setting would be the access to a variety of courses to choose from to broaden horizons. In high schools, this type of learning would also benefit students on a college preparation pathway. Many colleges and universities are online learning communities, and this allows students to get a taste of being self-motivated and difficulty of college classes. In elementary schools, it would offer a new setting for these young learners to be exposed to technology in another facet. They could deepen their understandings of basic skills and experience them in an interactive nature tailored to their needs.

On the other hand, there are some challenges that are posed when the discussion turns to virtual schooling. Going to school online limits the access to a face-to-face teacher support system, requires motivation on the students’ sides, and may require access to technologies that schools are not quite set up to offer. It is true that students have access to a certified instructor; however, they may have slow response times to questions via email or virtual contact. Students thrive on prompt feedback, especially in elementary schools. Growing up in rural West Virginia, I know personally that school internet access cannot always keep up with school plans, and that relying heavily on technology may be a problem. Our schools need updated in order to keep up, and there are very few funds to go around and help this issue. Further noted in this quote, “Without efforts to ensure equal access among all students, virtual learning’s potential to serve students at all learning levels—especially those who are unsuccessful in traditional schools—will be lost”, funding is key and in low availability (Tucker, 2007). According to the same article, another issue or challenge faced with virtual schooling is the idea of accountability. To elaborate, “Even basic statistics on student performance and course enrollments in virtual schools are difficult to obtain,” (Tucker 2007). Public schools are held to such scrutiny and held accountable to a T—virtual schooling should be as well.

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